

## Floods:



Nancy Johnson, 19, and Linda Christensen, 11, survived the floodwaters of August 18, 1955, which destroyed Camp Davis, a Pocono Mountain retreat operated by a retired Baptist minister. A few hours before this photo was taken, Linda's father identified the bodies of his wife, son (Linda's brother), his sister, and his sister-in-law. "I'm just thankful my little girl is safe," he said. "Now I have someone left."

# The Damage Can Be Immense, the Suffering Irreparable

## IMPROVEMENTS PLANNED FOR FLOOD WARNING SYSTEM

Plans are underway to upgrade the flood warning system for the Delaware River and some of its feeder streams, a move aimed at reducing flood losses in future years.

The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and National Weather Service (NWS) have obtained funding to add much needed monitoring and communications equipment to the Delaware River Basin's flood alert system during the coming year. The move is partly in response to serious flooding in the basin caused on September 16, 1999 by the remnants of a nasty hurricane named Floyd. Damage was estimated at \$140 million.

Proposed additions and upgrades to the warning system include:

- A new stream-gauge for the Schuylkill River at Norristown, Pa.
- Re-installation and modernization of a stream gauge at Tocks Island, N.J., in the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area.
- Improved hydrologic data for stream gauges at four locations, the Lehigh River at Lehighton, Pa., the Schuylkill River at Berne, Pa., the Brodhead Creek at Minisink Hills, Pa., and the Perkiomen Creek at Graterford, Pa.
- Improved monitoring at the stream gauge on the Brodhead Creek at Minisink Hills.



- Modernization of the NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) Weather Radio system in Philadelphia to improve coverage.
- Addition of two new NOAA Weather Radio transmitters in Sussex County, N.J., and in Sudlersville, Md. These combine with existing transmitters to extend weather radio coverage throughout the entire Delaware River Basin.

In addition to these improvements, the DRBC staff, with technical support from the commission's Flood Advisory Committee, has developed its own set of recommendations to upgrade flood warning equipment and modernize flood warning technology. A primary objective is expansion of the National Weather Service's Advanced Hydrologic Prediction Services (AHPS) system within the basin.

AHPS delivers long-range hydrologic products, including flood and drought predictions and water supply guidance. The products include information about forecast uncertainties as well as the probability that certain weather scenarios will occur.

The DRBC staff recommendations have been endorsed by Congress' Delaware River Basin Task Force, created to advance interstate watershed management within the basin. Funding for implementation is being sought.

The task force is co-chaired by Sherwood Boehlert of New York, Robert Borski of Pennsylvania, Michael Castle of Delaware, and Rush Holt of New Jersey.

The overall goal of flood preparedness is to reduce loss of life and property damage. There



High waters from the May 1942 flood inundate Bethlehem, Pa.



It is estimated that flood damage in the United States amounts to some \$4.5 billion a year - \$35 million in the Delaware River Basin. And flooding often disrupts government at high levels where officials must turn their attention away from other high priority issues to deal with it. Following the record flood of 1955 President Eisenhower (seated second from right) left the White House to meet with governors of flood-stricken eastern states at Windsor Locks, Conn. after flying over the stricken area.



## Sending the Right Signal

The creek's rising, top heavy with flood waters. Will we be okay?

Stay tuned ... to a NOAA weather radio.

These devices, along with standard radio channels, television, and emergency communications networks, are used to broadcast flood forecasts to local emergency managers in the Delaware River Basin.

The NOAA radios often can provide you the lead time necessary to escape the ravishes of a flood. The battery operated receivers can be purchased at many electronics stores at a relatively low cost (usually under \$35). The National Weather Service, the U.S. Geological Survey, and the commission urge anyone living along a waterway to purchase such a radio, which often is capable of automatically sounding an alarm when an emergency signal is transmitted.

The cost of these radios with their early alert systems is minuscule considering their potential to reduce economic losses due to flooding - estimated annually at \$4.5 billion nationally and \$35 million within the basin.

And they just might save your life.

are many activities, in addition to flood warning and response programs, which support this aim: flood plain regulations, property buyouts, storm water management, flood-proofing, and structural flood controls like dams and levees. These are particularly important to prevent new flood damage in developing areas and encourage wise flood plain use.

The commission's Flood Advisory Committee, established in March of 2000, is part of an effort to boost public awareness of flooding potential and improve coordination among various agencies. The committee is designed to promote efficient use of technical and financial resources for the benefit of the basin community. It will forward any recommendations to the commission for submission to organizations with flood preparedness and flood loss reduction responsibilities.

The committee held its first meeting on September 7, 2000. Its members include representatives from 18 organizations within the basin with responsibilities in flood loss reduction. Solomon Summers, director of the NWS's Eastern Regional Office, was elected chair; Clarke Gilman, who directs flood plain management at New Jersey's Department of Environmental Protection, vice chair.



The Assunpink Creek in Trenton, N.J., spilled over its banks in July of 1975 causing serious flooding throughout the area.